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Safe Food Handling

Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University

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SAFE FOOD HANDLING

Careful food handling limits the ability of bacteria to grow and reproduce in food and therefore to cause food-borne illness. Keep potentially hazardous foods (such as meat, dairy, and cooked foods) out of the temperature danger zone (40°F – 140°F). Refrigerator temperatures should be 40°F or less. Freezer temperatures should be 0°F or less.

TEMPERATURE CONTROL

Cooling

Cool foods quickly by:

- Placing food in shallow, partially covered pans.
- Organizing food in containers in refrigerators and freezers so air can circulate.
- Pre-cooling with ice baths before placing in refrigeration.
- Using an ice paddle to agitate foods in ice bath or refrigerator (to remove heat from the food).

Maintaining

Protect perishable food by:

- Picking up perishable donations last.
- Transporting perishable foods in an ice chest.
- Unloading and storing perishable foods first.

Thawing

Thaw frozen foods by:

- Storing in the refrigerator—allow 1 day for every 4–5 pounds.
- Thawing under running potable cold water.
- In the microwave only if the food will be cooked immediately.
- As part of the cooking process.

If frozen foods accidentally become thawed, special precautions will need to be taken depending upon the food item. Contact the local South Dakota county Extension office, the South Dakota Department of Health, or an official from your food program.

Cooking

Cook foods to a safe temperature to kill pathogenic microorganisms:

- Monitor temperatures with a food thermometer.
- Place in the thickest part of the food.
- Clean and sanitize thermometer before and after each use.

FOOD PREPARATION

Vegetables that may not be washed before consumption should be washed and agitated under cold water before distribution. If necessary, a brush may be used to dislodge dirt. Do not use any soap or detergent when cleaning fresh fruits and vegetables. Sinks should be cleaned and sanitized before being used to prepare any food items.

Bulk items, such as bagels, that are not individually wrapped should be protected from contamination by having a food bank worker dispense them with plastic gloves or tongs or by providing utensils or waxed-paper squares to food recipients.

PERSONNEL PRACTICES

Good worker hygiene is critical, as bacteria are easily transferred from workers to food.

Personal Hygiene

Workers should have:

- clean hair and bodies with nails clean and short
- long hair pulled back or covered
- clean clothes and aprons with pockets empty of items which could fall into food
- minimal jewelry
- clean disposable gloves over bandaged cuts
- clean disposable gloves whenever touching food that will not be washed or cooked before use

Worker Habits

- Keep hands away from face, hair, or clothing.
- Turn your face away from food and cover your mouth and nose with a tissue if you must sneeze or cough. After sneezing into a tissue, throw the tissue away, wash hands, and change gloves.
- Never eat, drink, chew gum, or smoke in food-preparation areas.
- Always wash hands under the following conditions:
 - when changing tasks (always wash hands and change gloves)

- when first entering the operation
- before handling food
- after handling trash containers
- after using the toilet or changing diapers
- after petting animals
- after coughing, sneezing or nose blowing
- after smoking
- after handling any toxics or poisons
- after handling contaminated food
- after handling raw meat, poultry or eggs
- after handling pencils, paper, money, etc.
- after touching the face or body
- after touching the floor or any contaminated surface

The best method for hand washing

- Remove all rings.
- Moisten hands and exposed forearms in running warm water.
- Apply soap.
- Lather every hand surface (including the area between fingers, backs of hands, wrists, and under fingernails) and rub vigorously for at least 20 seconds. Clean fingernails with a sanitized nail brush.
- Holding hands downward, rinse well.
- Dry hands with a paper towel.
- Turn off the faucet using the paper towel instead of bare hands.

Employee Illness

A food employee must report to the person in charge* if he or she is ill or experiencing the following symptoms:

- diarrhea, fever, vomiting, jaundice or sore throat with a fever
- a cut containing pus, such as a boil or infected wound that is draining and located on the hands, arms, wrist, or a body part that is not covered

- if the employee has been diagnosed with a food-borne illness or lives with someone that is diagnosed with a food-borne illness

*The manager will make the decision to send the employee home or restrict the job the individual performs that day.

Adapted from the Safe Aid Series, Montana State University Extension Service, 1996

DIGGING DEEPER – SAFE FOOD HANDLING

- 1) Food can be chilled with several different methods. Which of the following is not a safe method of cooling leftover chili?
 - a) Put the pot of chili in the refrigerator.
 - b) Put the pot of chili into a sink of ice water.
 - c) Put the chili into several small, shallow containers.
 - d) Stir the chili with an ice paddle.
- 2) Which statement about hand-washing is not correct?
 - a) Rub hands together with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.
 - b) Wash your hands before and after handling raw meat.
 - c) After washing your hands, turn the faucet off with a paper towel.
 - d) Wash your hands before using the bathroom.
- 3) While working with food, personal hygiene is very important. Which of the following is an example of good personal hygiene?
 - a) Taking a bath or shower every week.
 - b) Wearing clean clothes to work.
 - c) Wearing fake fingernails.
 - d) Wearing several rings on your fingers.



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